

533 his waist from which hang a number of shells, claws, little horns,
 222 teeth and similar trifles, beats on that rustic drum day and night with-
 out ceasing and, with the continuous movement of his body, makes the
 trinkets about his waist rattle all this accompanied by a song or rather
 a lugubrious and high-pitched shouting which can be heard at a great
 distance. This ridiculous performance is not a simple demonstration
 of rejoining but rather, in their opinion, a rite necessary to hasten
 the ripening of the longed for and beneficent fruit."

222 "When a woman arrives from the forest laden with fruit, roots
 262 or other eatables, all the other women of the village crowd to her
 hut and she, after having set aside enough for the sustenance of her
 family, distributes the rest, the other women not saying a word of
 [626] showing any sign of appreciation. Were she to refrain from giving
 away her surplus, it would cause the greatest displeasure, and might
 even provoke some dangerous quarrel."

181 "The Mataguayos are timid and cowardly, but vengeful in
 the extreme. They never forget an offense—sooner or later they will
 [671] be avenged. The law of requital is unbreakable for them. They
 avoid making war when this is possible, but if they are attacked they
 [411] defend themselves. Their most common weapon is the arrow."

"They recognize no authority and no law. The child obeys
 593 its parents if it wishes to and the latter, though they may love their
 children, have no power at all over them. Nevertheless one does not
 generally encounter lack of respect toward the old or toward the un-
 fortunate." [594]

462 "The men busy themselves with fishing and only very rarely
 [241] indulge in hunting. Their agricultural activities are limited to the
 sowing of a few clumps of pumpkins and watermelons. With the
 [283] juice of the latter they make aloja. Some of them also devote their
 time to making thin ropes of agave fiber with which they construct
 their nets."

"All other work is done by the women. She must not only
 prepare the food but also fetch fruit and roots from the forest; not
 only bring water but also chop firewood; not only look after the
 cleanliness of the hut but also make it. In one word: she is a slave."

881 "When a girl reaches nubility she is hidden in a corner of the
 hut and covered with fronds and rags. It is illicit for her to speak to
 anybody or taste meat or fish for a determined length of time. Mean-
 while a drummer goes through the same ceremony in front of her

this shared work has its cause in that the last two mentioned products must necessarily be gathered within a certain limited period and therefore the Indians have need of the combined effort of all the workers they can muster in order to harvest all they possibly can. 222
462

For the making of nets they must first, naturally, begin by making twine, which they call nin'hiói. They get their textile material from a bromelia which in Quechua is called cháguar (a name now also used by the white settlers) and in Mataco húie. They steep the leaves of this plant in water for a time and then comb them with a clam shell. Once this has been done the residue is put out into the sun to dry and whiten. The last stage is that of twisting the fiber -- a wad of it is held in the left hand and rubbed back and forth [182] on a leg, upon which they sprinkle a little gypsum in order to avoid getting hurt. This gypsum powder is called maccotác-muc. 283

The twine being thus ready they make not only nets with it but also ropes, which they call nin'hiói-less, which means family or skein of threads.

Some of the Indians have special skill in making weapons, and make them as a means of barter with their companions. They use a very hard wood for the bow, and ostrich [rhea--Translator] tendons or strips of hide for the string. The arrow shaft is made of cane, the head of some hard wood, often tipped with bone and barbed like a fish hook. 411

Chapter V

Marriage Customs

Those who do not know anything about the Indians may believe that they lead morally and materially sterile lives. Yet this is not actually the case: the savage loves, hates and knows what ambition, enjoyments, dangers and glory are. He is acquainted with religion and with fear. In these primitive societies the whole gamut of human affections is experienced precisely "as among the whites," as Faustino used to say to me when I asked him about the intimate experiences of the Indian way of life. 152

During the aloja revels squabbles, fights and killings are frequent, and this not only among the Indians but among the Chaco whites also. 578

A couple of words now about the yuchan, also called palo borracho (drunken tree--Translator). It is a bombaceous tree whose scientific name is Chorisia insignis, and might well be called the cotton tree. It has a strange shape which justifies its vernacular name. The trunk is shaped like an oil jar, that is, narrow at its base, wide in the middle and narrow once more at the point where the crown forks. The trunk grows to a diameter of two meters and is covered with spiked bumps. At most it reaches a height of four or five meters and is often accompanied by a shoot growing at its base. The crown is at first made up of only two branches which later subdivide and form a wide crown of some eight, ten or more meters in diameter. The leaves are similar to those of the walnut but a little smaller and provide good shade. 137

From the bark, strips are cut which are used for tying bundles, as roofing material, to wrap and tie bunches of tobacco leaves and for any similar use. The Indians make their canoes from the trunk, all of a piece. In order to do this all they do is hollow it out with any old tool, since the wood is soft and easily worked when newly cut but later becomes harder than cork although spongy like it when dry. The Matacos use the name cuóu quiác for canoe, which in their tongue means "duck." 824
[283] ●
[396]

But the thing which is especially interesting about the yuchan is its fruit, which in size and shape is like a lemon. When it is ripe, which usually occurs between November and January, according to its location, the lemons split into four lobes and there appears a plume-like puff of cotton, white as snow, which little by little is carried away by the wind. 137

One of these open lemons is about the size of a fist, and each tree produces hundreds of them each year.

The Indians make a limited use of this cotton, but the whites do not, although I have seen in Catamarca, where the number of these trees is small, white cloth made from this material which won prizes at the Córdoba exhibition.

In the Chaco there is an immense number of yuchans which grow mixed in with other hard-wood trees. If this cotton could be

Mataco Marriage

By NIELS FOCK

This paper was written on a field trip to the Mataco, carried out under the auspices of the Fundación Williams, Argentina with support from the Danish State Research Foundation. I wish to express my hearty thanks to these institutions, and particular thanks to my professor, Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, who has supported the expedition both scientifically and morally.

The Mataco Indians inhabit the western areas of the Argentine Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo. They have for centuries been in contact with civilisation, but as a frontier tribe they seem to have built up a special traditionalism as a protective bulwark. Particularly the north-eastern Mataco at the central Pilcomayo have preserved their ancient traditions to this day, and the occupational system is still stamped by the collecting by women and the fishing of the men. The customs in connexion with marriage have to a large extent been retained unaffected to the present day, evincing many primitive features as, for example, the lack of any form of wedding ceremony. The contraction of marriage extends over a period dating from the girl's initiation until her first confinement.

The Mataco regard the initiation of girls as an introduction to marriage. This initiation consists in the girl's seclusion—or better—segregation from everyone apart from her mother. It comes as a prolongation of her first menstruation, and the long isolation is spent in continual work making *caraguatd* cord. It is considered very important that this work should be performed rapidly and well in order that an impression can be formed of the girl's ability as regards her main occupation in the future. As a rule the end of seclusion is marked by an *alojs* festival during which the girl looks around for a man. That same night she is able to take him with her to her home and allow him to sleep with her.

The girl being initiated is then called *asutika*; sexually and economically she is now ready for marriage. Normally several years will pass during which the girl may well search for a husband, but the actual result of her efforts is a series of sexual relations that seldom endure beyond a few days. It is nearly always the girl who takes the initiative for these short term adventures. At the village dancing-place where every evening the young men dance in chains or rings, the girls also